

HILL THE RAILROAD KING, WHO IS 68 YEARS OLD TO-DAY

Frank Carpenter Tells About His
20,000 Miles of Roads and
How He Manages Them.

NOW PLANS TO GRAB CANADA

His Eye on the Dominion and the
West—Queer Methods of
Management.

By Frank G. Carpenter.

[Special Correspondence of The Times-Dispatch.]
NEW YORK, September 12.—When James J. Hill wakes up next Sunday morning he will be sixty-eight years old. He will probably jump from his bed as fresh as any one of his ten thousand employees of half his age, and the chances are that he will do more work during the coming week than any of them. Mr. Hill has all the energy of a man in his forties, and his voice is as strong and his step as firm as when he rode over the Red River Valley in an ox cart a generation ago and decided that it was rich enough to pay dividends on a railroad all time in the future. Mr. Hill started life as a farmer's boy in Ontario, Canada, and he earned some of his first money clerking in a steamboat office in the town of St. Paul. He was working there at a dollar a week when the railroad was started, and he stayed at the time it was born, just fifty years ago, and he has since worked to such purpose that he has at least 20 million dollars for every year of his age.

The Railroad King.
It is a big thing to be worth a hundred millions, but it is more to be the chief railroad man of the United States and the chief of the railroad kings of the world.

Paul and Pacific of the Dutch bondholders, he knew just what he could make out of it. That road had been very expensively built, but Hill tore up the tracks, reduced the grades, and so made one locomotive do the work of three.

In building the Great Northern Mr. Hill based his probable success on the difference in grades which that road had in its favor over the other trans-Pacific lines. He made it cross the mountains at a lower pass than any other, and built it better and cheaper. The result was to carry freight more cheaply, and, by a study of the traffic, was able to keep his cars full going and coming. It was through him that lumber was first shipped from the West to the East, and by his steamships he is now building up a great traffic in freight from the East to the West, to go on to the Orient.

Is Hill Extravagant?
Some railroad men think Mr. Hill extravagant, and others tell me that he is the stingiest man on earth. I have known many who worked for him and some who have been discharged. He is close and just the reverse. He believes in economy to the smallest details, and he cuts expenses down to the last degree. At the same time he will spend millions to reduce grades and save motive power. He has been operating the Great Northern for years at from 4 to 11 per cent. of its gross earnings. A record that no other railroad in the country has. He has the grades so cut that only 1 per cent. of them between his Eastern and Western terminals require double-header engines, while on other transcontinental lines such engines are needed on more than 10 per cent. of the grades.

On Mr. Hill's railroads all the receipts come to him. He does not believe in dividing with other companies. He has the express business, the sleeping cars, the dining and parlor cars and all forms of service of revenue. At the same time, he is ready to spend money to build up trade. For years he furnished blooded live stock, seed, wheat and other grains

Mr. Hill seldom pardons failure; he has no sympathy with incompetency, and he will dismiss any one, from vice-president to brakeman, upon provocation. He likes to have his men plan out new schemes for increasing the traffic, but he will not permit more than one or two mistakes in management without a discharge. He is often gruff to his subordinates, dragging them roughshod over the coals as to his business, so as to make them decidedly uncomfortable.

James J. Hill has a few hobbies outside his railroads. He likes good pictures. He has one of the finest art galleries of the West, and I have been told that some of his paintings cost as much as \$50,000. He is a connoisseur of precious stones, and is said to have a collection of diamonds worth something like \$200,000. He likes fine stock, and he has a 10,000-acre farm within ten miles of St. Paul, of which 4,000 acres are water. He pretends that the owner makes money, but I am told that it costs him about \$50,000 every year.

Not long ago Miss Havermeier, who owns a farm about half as large, came in to advise with Mr. Hill about her establishment, telling him that it annually cost her \$20,000 more than she made. Mr. Hill replied that she ought to send her manager out to St. Paul and see his farm and thereby learn how to carry on such an estate at a profit.

For a long time Mr. Hill sent fine stock, sheep, cattle and hogs from this farm to the various sections of his railroad, stipulating that they be used for breeding purposes. He always sold them at a moderate figure to one of the leading farmers, rarely charging more than the freight from St. Paul. Among other things he had very fine hogs, the offspring of some that he had imported from the old country at several hundred dollars each. These were sold for about \$25 apiece. Not long ago when Mr. Hill came into his office he found an old farmer waiting for him. As soon as he entered the farmer said:

Mr. Hill, I have come down to do

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JAMES J. HILL'S HOME AT ST. PAUL.

That is the position James J. Hill holds today. He has greater transportation resources than any other man in the world. He controls the Great Northern system, which he created and also the Burlington and the Northern Pacific, the two biggest railroads which he has entered into the Great Northern system.

As head of the Great Northern he has more than seven thousand miles of railroad tracks. The Burlington gives him eight thousand miles more, and the Northern Pacific something like five thousand. So that altogether these three systems alone back only five thousand miles of reaching around the world. You started them at Seattle and extended them outward across our continent, the Atlantic, Europe and Asia, they would reach the eastern shore of China, and there you might stop on Hill's big boats and complete the circuit to Seattle. Hill's steamers on the Pacific are the largest that float that might ocean and he has another line from Buffalo to Seattle, which is the largest and best upon the Great Lakes. Starting at Buffalo, one can go from there across the continent, across the Pacific to Japan, and on to Shanghai and Hongkong, or more than half way around the world without taking his foot off the property owned or managed by this railroad king.

In addition to this, Hill is supposed to have a controlling interest in the Erie, and in other roads, which give his traffic an outlet to the Atlantic sea. In fact, if one could have a look at Pierpont Morgan's private account books he would find that James J. Hill owns something of the Atlantic lines as well.

Jim Hill's New Roads.

I understand that Mr. Hill's plans for the future comprehend an enormous addition to his present territoriality. He is building feeders all along the Great Northern, and is steadily adding new lines to each system. He recently bought, he is said, the controlling interest in the Kansas Missouri and Texas, to give his Burlington traffic an outlet to the Gulf of Mexico, and the Great Northern is reaching out toward Canada to grab the new wheat belt at a dozen different points. This octopus of the Northwest already has one claw in Winnipeg and another on the great coal mines of British Columbia, while a half dozen others are working northward into the agricultural regions. He sneers at the idea of a possible railroad to Hudson Bay, saying that it would take a hundred years, for the road would soon be covered with ice. At the same time well-posted Canadians tell me that he has a charter for such a road by way of Brandon, and that if the other lines start toward that great inland sea, he will be on the ground as soon as they.

Mr. Hill is also building a number of roads in the Northwest. He has lines to the mines of British Columbia, and I understand will make extensions on to Vancouver.

He expects to run a branch down to Portland, when will shorten the route from Chicago to that city by over 200 miles, and, it is said, that he will build a road from Portland to San Francisco between the Cascade Mountains and the Pacific Ocean with a water-level grade, which will reduce the time between those two points about twelve hours. The Burlington route will eventually be extended to San Francisco, and altogether the northern half of our great West will not soon slip from this man's hands.

Some Hill Methods.

Mr. Hill is a wonder as a railroad builder and manager. He knows the United States better than his Bible, and he has gone over every part of the Northwest looking up the possibilities for new traffic. When he extended his line to the Pacific he traveled over every inch of the route on foot and on horseback, making a thorough study of what was under the soil as well as what was in it. He rode his built through the Red River Valley he went over that country in an ox cart, studying the soil and its possibilities, and when he bought the old St.

to different farming communities, and he is ready to invest money in irrigation projects for the sake of the traffic he can get out of them. He loans cars and equipment to logging roads in order that they may be ready for timber traffic and give more freight to the Great Northern.

Speaking of irrigation, during my visit to the Wenatchee Valley last year, State Senator Grinn told me how, during the panic of 1900, he called on Jim Hill in St. Paul, and asked for a loan to irrigate that valley. Mr. Hill had never met him, but within half an hour he had left him \$10,000, and taken the bonds of his company as security. Mr. Grinn told me that that money due the ditch which started the population of the Wenatchee Valley. It was the corner-stone of a community which is now supplying some of the most expensive fruit of the Eastern markets, and which gives the Great Northern a shipment of twenty cars of wheat per day during the season. I understand that Hill has not yet gotten back all the money advanced, but that he will have it soon, and at the same time he has received many times that in the increased business of his railroad.

Jim Hill's Memory.

Railroad men tell me that Mr. Hill has a phenomenal memory. He never forgets a man or a thing. A few years ago one of the editors of a little paper along the Great Northern route came to him to get a mileage book, such as is given to country newspapers for publishing the railroad time tables. He had been supplied and had started out, when he met Mr. Hill coming in, and the two talked together for a moment. During the conversation the editor said something that Mr. Hill did not like, and Mr. Hill remarked:

"I suppose you came in for a pass." The editor replied: "No, I have one already," and he thereupon pulled out the mileage book. As soon as he left Mr. Hill went into the general passenger agent, and asked him how he supposed to give a mileage book to that fellow. The editor replied that it was according to custom to give such books in exchange for advertising, whereupon Mr. Hill said:

"Well, you may omit the rule as far as that man is concerned. He has a little six by nine paper, 157 miles from here. When he started it I gave him a pass and transported all his machinery for nothing. This was twenty-six years ago. It is now eighteen years since he gave me a note in his paper, and I don't want any more passes given to him."

The mind that could remember an incident like that down to the year, and the day, and at the same time supply the transportation for half a continent, is, to say the least, remarkable.

Hill as an Educator.

The Great Northern Railroad has, I am told, been a training school for the most prominent railroad men of the country. Mr. Hill's methods are so strict that a man who succeeds with him is fitted to do for others; and Hill's graduates are always in demand among the financiers. Take for instance, W. E. Newcomb, the president of the Vanderbilt lines; W. W. Finley, vice-president of the Southern; Russell Harding, vice-president of the Erie; L. E. Johnson, vice-president of the Norfolk and Western, and E. Britton, the president of the Colorado and Pacific. They are all graduates from the Great Northern. W. W. McKenna, vice-president of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul; David Miller, vice-president of the Burlington, and Frederick Underwood, president of the Erie, all worked under Jim Hill. It is the same with John H. Stevens, who is now engineering the Panama Canal. He was for years, chief engineer of the Great Northern system, and located Stevens's Pass, through which that system crosses the Cascade Mountains.

The men who work for the Hill railroads have to keep alive. No one on the Great Northern is sure of his position without he is awake and doing his best.

more business with you. You will remember I bought a box of you ten months ago for \$2. Well, I now want to tell you that I like it so well that I will take your whole litter if you will let me have them at that price."

Mr. Hill thereupon explained the philosophy of breeding, telling the old farmer what the hogs had actually cost. The old man said: "I want!" and went out with his eyes as big as your first.

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